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EXHIBITION OF PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS

BY STEPHEN HAWEIS

LONDON ENGLAND

THE ART GALLERY OF TORONTO

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THE ART GALLERY OF TORONTO

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CATALOGUE

PREFACE BY STEPHEN HAWEIS

INTRODUCTION BY BLAKE-MORE GODWIN

LIST OF PICTURES

SEPTEMBER, 1919

MR. HAWEIS STUDYING THE SEA GARDENS

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PREFACE

I am told that these pictures come under the head of Cubism, in that they are composed of forms and colours of objects in Nature arbitrarily put together in harmonious relation. They are not Representations of Nature, but Interpretations, based upon a certain particular interest in the subjects which form their motif. They aim at being truthful impressions, not primary but secondary; that is, expressions of what remains in the memory after continued observation, not the immediate record of any given moment or place.

Tropical fish are actually among the most brilliant things in Nature, comparable only to butterflies and jewels; they even appear brilliant beneath many feet of water, as do masses of coral, fans and certain sponges. The variety and relation of the colours seen among the coral leaves in the mind an impression of something far more vivid than the colours actually are, owing to the sheen and flicker of light and movement; therefore an accurate transcript from Nature, if it were possible, would be actually far less truthful than the truth interpreted in terms of memory. What we retain from study is more important to us than the entire truth.

It is the impossibility of attaining Absolute Truth which develops in Art the various interpretative schools of painting each of which has its own standards and aims. The conventional methods of expression are entirely satisfactory within their limits, but as every method is only a convention invented and pursued to its logical conclusion, so it is right and natural to attempt new conventions to interpret what has hitherto not interested the artist or has been regarded as inexpressible.

Certain patterns produce movement until the flat surface seems to be alive, certain curves suggest slow or rapid motion, as angular lines suggest a different impulse. With things that are in continual motion we have the choice of drawing them accurately in one position and supplying the motion from imagination, or departing from the known forms to suggest the infinite variety that we really see as separate pictures in rapid succession.

The dead fish that do duty in company with a beaker of wine and a split lemon for still life do not interpret anything of the life and happiness of a fish in water. The scientific diagram from which the various kinds of fish can be identified are to me no better. My pictures do not attempt to compete with them, their aim is to be everything that they are not, to describe the joy of the fishes' life, the beauty of marine growths, the wonder of one who loves to watch the Mystery-play of their lives.

The excitement and interest of fishing with rod and reel for the great sea-dwellers is a thing as incomprehensible to those who do not fish as the joy of chasing a little ball with a club from one hole to another to others who do not play golf. The leaping flash of a living ingot of silver a yard long from sea like a breathing sapphire is an emotion, the rush of any great fish is an incommunicable experience. A hundred Yellowtails over a park of purple sea fans, the Angel fish among their rock palaces, the silver Pompanos and Shad on their lawns of sand, the various Parrot fish with their impossible magnificence — to some these may mean food or sport alone, to me they are the peoples of another world no less beautiful than our own where there is Love and War, but no sin other than ill-health. If there is God upon earth there is certainly God in the deep sea. Pictures, if puny prayers are yet an act of worship which some may respect, albeit others may find them excessively ridiculous.

The imagination is a finer medium of vision than the eye; the eye records what is seen at a given moment, but any photograph of rapidly moving objects will convince us that what we see is not the exact truth. Photographic truths are often completely untrue both to the eye and the imagination, but whereas the eye makes a final statement, the imagination can construct a sequence of events endowing them with life and movement if it is sympathetically approached. Shapes as we know them, presuppose the subject at rest; what we actually see of things in motion requires a new convention. A line which in one place indicates the edge of something may equally be used to suggest direction of movement. To me interrupted lines convey the idea of movement in a marvelous degree and I find that figures may be broken and distorted in many ways without destroying their beauty as such, if all the lines have a cer-

tain degree of [illegible] the several shapes and masses created are in equi[illegible]ia.

I have spent several years in various parts of the Bahamas, and have known the sea in many climes. I have seen intense blues in the Mediterranean and about the Channel Islands; I have never been sure that it was very different there from the colour of the Indian Ocean or South Pacific. But the Bahamas have one thing that is not found in any other part of the world, vast expanses of shallow sea whose greatest depth at any tide may not be more than two fathoms. There are few places where one may sail in a boat miles from land and be able to get out and walk knee deep in perfect security collecting sponges, shells or fans. These shallows upon leagues of immaculate sand, take on a colour that can be seen nowhere else, not the deep blue of the Caribbean Sea though there is plenty of water deep enough for the deepest blues, but the "White waters," pale green, pale azures and mauves in which the pelicans love to fish and long shanked birds wade between the sand flats, are not found elsewhere. These are the sponging grounds where sponges of all kinds, from the coarse black loggerhead to the silky reef sponge, are hooked up with long poles; plumes and feathers and fans of vivid violet and yellow are found there, as well as in the patches of coral rocks which are the towns and villages of the sea people. With a glass bottomed bucket one may watch them as easily as if in an aquarium. I have sat on the bottom of the sea in a diving hood thirty feet below the surface, among shoals of incredible fish within arm's length, for they exhibit no fear of a diver at all. I do not doubt they would take food from one's hand if one sat quite still for a long time.

The Fijian pictures were painted in New York from studies I made during the year spent in the South Sea Islands. While travelling I made sketches of all sorts of things which I soon found to be valuable only as notes upon which to base my impressions, and I felt that painting with a "broken French accent" amid surroundings so entirely new to me did not give a truthful interpretation of all I saw and felt, and it was this that turned my attention to the schools of Modern Art, which at that time I despised, and by which I was most unwilling to be influenced in any particular. The choice comes to every artist at some moment of whether he will paint what he can or go

a-seeking for what he is pretty sure he can't. In the first case he may become widely respected, in the second he does not lose his own respect. It came to me through the rhythm of Vakamololo, a concerted dance performed by the men of a Fijian village seated in long rows upon the ground. Every meed of movement is used from the gentle gesture of a ballerine to the vigorous hook and swing of the boxer. Shining with cocoanut oil and garlanded with wreaths of mango leaves or coloured crotons, the dancers move like a shoal of fish as though impelled by a common soul. From earliest childhood every Fijian learns to swing his hands when he sings, and he always sings. Meke is the history and literature of the people, it is contemporary celebration, personal compliment, something more vital than religion to them. The white officials in Fiji regard the ceremonial yangona drinking and the ceremonial dancing as tiresome hindrances to the day's work, for without ceremony the Fijian will not do anything and the British are wise enough to respect the customs of native peoples—after long apprenticeship and much tribulation.

Many years ago John LaFarge went to Fiji and made a few exquisite studies of the people and their ceremonies. As pictures, records, poems, they are superb, but they are not vakamololo. The feeblest convention insisting upon the inspiring swing of those live brown gods in unison means more to me than perfectly still shapes selected from imaginary moments which is the best the former methods of art can express.

I did not adopt a new art; I doubt if anyone does; art as an adopted child is always a changeling for the child of experience. The sights and sounds of the South Seas were a new impulse which found its own expression in these pictures and they are true interpretations to me of a life I hope to renew if ever occasion offers again, for there is very much work to be done by a sympathetic artist and antiquary where at present there are none but money-grubbing hunters, store-keepers and overworked Government officials.

STEPHEN HAWEIS.

Nassau, Bahamas.

27 A TONGAN BOY

THE PAINTINGS AND DRAWINGS OF STEPHEN HAWEIS

INTRODUCTION

To offer for public approval an exhibition of such personal and modern tendencies as is this one without a few words in explanation of the motive of the artist is something like asking the Australian Bushman to purchase a modern tractor and cultivator without explaining to him its uses and workings. In the splendid preface which Mr. Haweis has prepared for the catalogue of his paintings he has left little to be said relative to his plans and purposes. It remains however briefly to sketch his life and artistic training and add a few further critical notes.

Stephen Haweis was the son of gifted parents. His father was an Anglican clergyman, for many years Incumbent of St. James Church, Marylebone, London, one of the five Crown Chapels, appointment to which was the gift of the King. Rev. Hugh Richard H eis visited America a number of times, lecturing on music and literature. His mother wrote several books, many papers on art and decoration, and adapted Chaucer for the use of school children. Mr. Haweis' grandfather and great grandfather were both clergymen prominent in their time, while his mother's father was a portrait painter of the school of Sir Thomas Lawrence.

Stephen Haweis was educated at Westminster School, London, and at Peterhouse, Cambridge, after which he went to Paris, studying there under Alphonse Mucha. He did much photographic work for Rodin, by whom he was introduced to Eugene Carriere, whose pupil he became. Through Rodin he also met the great Belgian sculptor and painter Constantin Meunier. Other artists, Charles Morice, Whistler and Charles Conder among them, influenced his work. He exhibited at the Salon of the Champs de Mars for many years, at the Salon D'Automne from its beginning, and was a member of the Salon des Independents. Tiring of only speaking the language that others had spoken be-

fore, he sought a new form of expression and to begin his quest made a trip in 1913 to the South Seas where experiences would be entirely new to him and subject matter hardly touched, for only Gauguin at Tahiti and John La Farge in one visit to the Fijis have ever dipped into the vast store of material, and neither of them had the aims of Haweis.

With his departure for the South Seas the first phase of his art came to an end. The present exhibition contains one painting representing this period, that called Forte dei Marmi, Liguria (No. 1), done in 1910. It is a good example of impressionistic painting, showing the influence of the great masters of that school; but it says nothing new. It is true that civilization has persisted for so long and man has always been so busy expressing his thoughts that perhaps there is very little new to say. But one may at least express old thoughts in a new form. So it was this dissatisfaction in telling the old story in a way which, while not especially old, at least had many apostles already, that induced Haweis to become a wanderer. He chose the South Seas partly because they had attracted him from his earliest youth. His first interest was brought about through a case of relics sent his grandfather from Tahiti by the missionaries to the Island, whom he had helped to send there.

The next three paintings in the exhibition, A Fijian Village; Loma Loma Fiji; and Native House, Fiji, (Nos. 2, 3 and 4) may be said to represent the transition. On arriving in the islands he retained for a time the first dialect of his artistic language. These three oils however begin to show a new handling. Perhaps there is just a faint trace of Post Impressionism. If so, the influence was unconscious, and the treatment is due more to the exotic nature of the subjects than to any desire to affiliate with the new movements.

In the native Fijian dance, the Vakamololo, he found his first new inspiration, and to that may be traced the future developments in his art. In any pictorial presentation of this ceremony the essentials are the movement and rhythm. To represent them adequately he first attempted to adapt the Indian custom of multiplying limbs to indicate motion. The pictures numbered 5 to 12 in this exhibition show well the results of his efforts. The multiplication of limbs is especially apparent

in Rotary Movement, Vakamololo (No. 5), where we feel the swing of the arms and the sway of the bodies. In the first Fijian Dance (No. 8) he is perhaps most successful in the introduction of arbitrary curves to accentuate this impression of motion. Here, more than in any other of the series, has he suggested the rhythmic movement of the bodies. In War Meke (No. 15) again he has been very successful in depicting the measured, heavy tread of the warriors. The entire Vakamololo series is a group of sketches for friezes. The repetition and rhythm found in them are equally necessary for a proper representation of the subject and for a well composed and balanced frieze.

From the multiplication of limbs he progressed by accident to a system of broken lines, his theory being that by the use of the arbitrary curves already noticed and by breaking the lines of his composition a better effect of motion was produced without undue distortion of the figures. His object, "the expression of the inexpressible" as it has been called, or the attempt to show change of position, light and colour in one picture, has forced him into the ranks of the modernists, and his works have been classed as cubistic, though in their simplicity and economy they show slight traces of Post Impressionism, and are still allied to the older school by the desire for pure beauty and colour and design. But above all they are distinctly individual, and so can hardly be attached to any school.

The drawing of the Fijian period, representing heads of natives and native chiefs are of admirable quality, and give evidence of the sound technical training which he had received, as well as his ability to express racial characteristics with a few simple strokes of his pencil. They give further promise to that furnished by his early paintings of the success which he might achieve along more conventional lines than those which he has chosen to follow.

After a year spent in the South Seas he arrived at San Francisco and proceeded to New York by way of Panama, where he worked up his sketches into finished paintings. Having been refused for service in the British army in 1914, he went to the Bahamas and there found an even more fertile field from which to reap subjects peculiarly fitted to his manner. In the clear shallow waters of the sea gardens where grow coral, sea fans, and sponges, and where live fish of many varieties, the secrets of the sea are

revealed in their most brilliant colourings to him who will observe them through the glass bottom boat or bucket.

Among the last group now displayed (Nos. 56 to 77) are some of the results of Mr. Haweis' intense study of the sea life around Nassau. Those pictures which show the sea gardens were designed as mural decorations for the cabins of yachts, aquaria, and museums of natural history. Their charm lies in their decorative pattern and colour and in the success with which they represent not an impression of a momentary phase of life, but a succession of events, as does the Young Grouper (No. 56) where the movement of the fish, the swirl of the water produced by that movement, and the changing colour are admirably produced. This painting, as well as most of the others is not a photographic reproduction, but the result of many long hours of careful study which have combined to produce a vivid impression of a series of rapid changes, all of which have been blended into a single picture. As a colourist Mr. Haweis ranks high. Beautiful as is the pattern in his pictures, the colour is by far the most striking feature.

Two honours have recently come to the artist. In 1918 he was appointed to direct the decoration of the shelters on the battle front and in the reconstructed villages of the invaded district of France. While he was prevented from going over by various circumstances, he was asked to undertake the decoration of War Memorial Chapel in the Church of St. Francis Xavier, Nassau, Bahamas. Here he has executed twelve paintings—his first venture into the realm of religious art, and at the same time the first instance of ecclesiastical decorations showing a strong influence of the modern movement in art. In the simplicity and dignity of the draperies, they aproach the magnificent Byzantine works of the middle ages, while in other respects they are entirely modern.

Mr. Haweis writes as charmingly as he paints. He has published The Book about the Sea Gardens and has contributed many articles to Vanity Fair and other American and European periodicals.

BLAKE-MORE GODWIN,

Curator Toledo Museum of Art.

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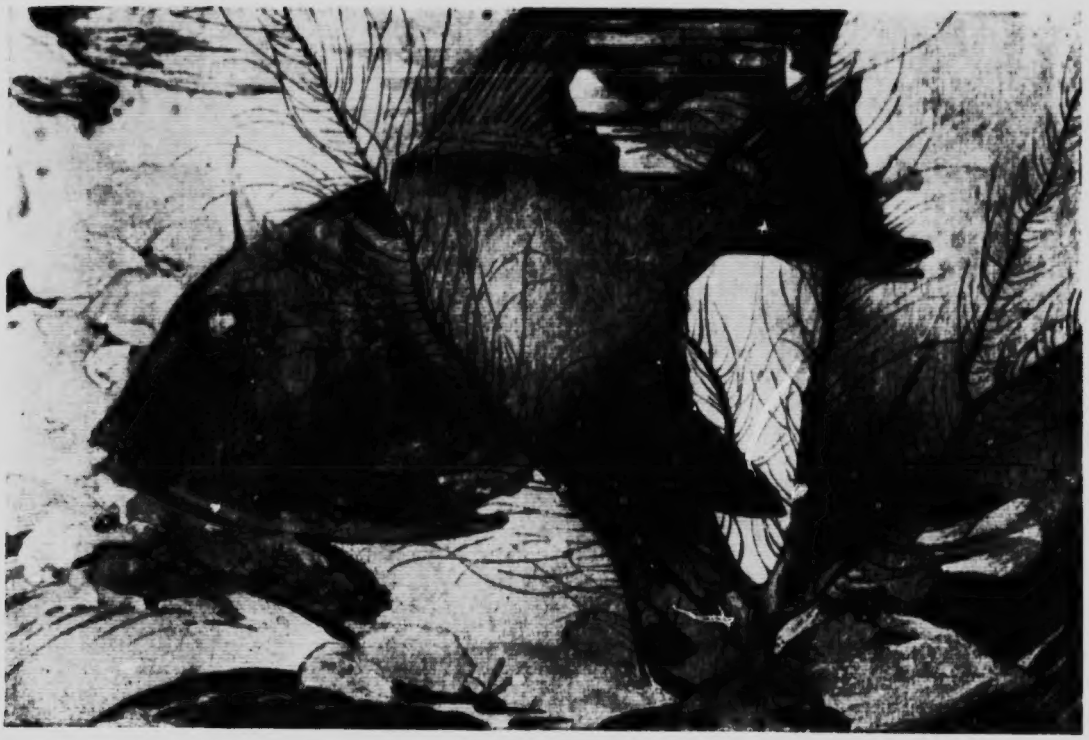
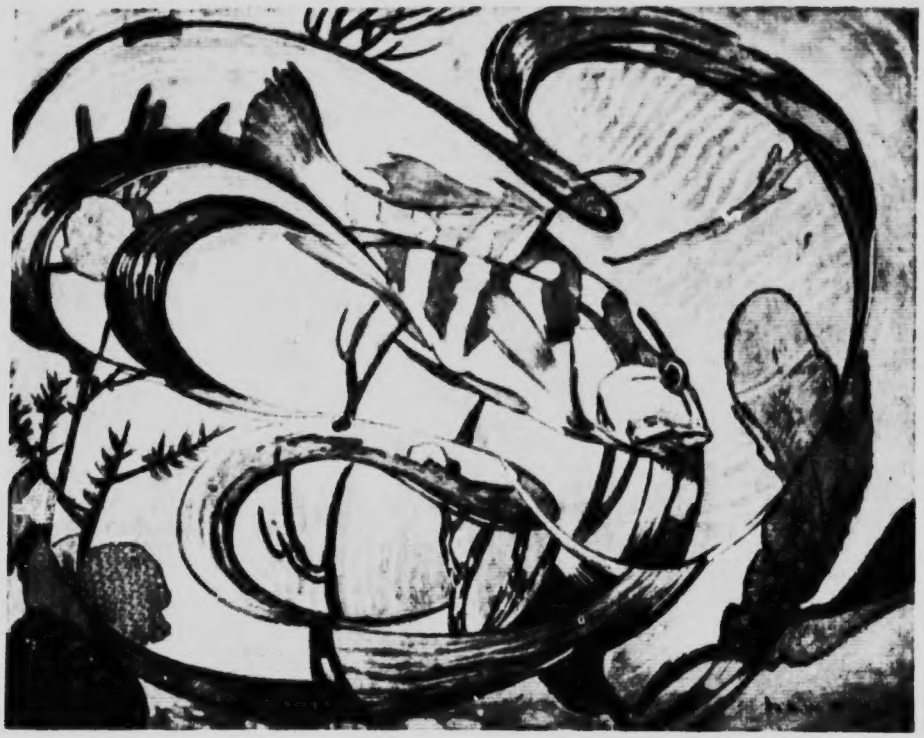
CATALOGUE

1 Forte Dei Marmi, Liguria
2 A Fijian Village
3 Loma Loma, Fiji
4 Native House, Fiji
5 Rotary Movement, Vakamololo
6 Frieze Design, Vakamololo
7 Turning Movement, Vakamololo
8 Fijian Dance
9 Emotional Movement, Vakamololo
10 Fijian Dance
11 Vakamololo, Three Girls
12 Girls at Nataveira, Vakamololo
13 Men on the Beach, Breadfruit Trees and Sound of the Reef
14 By the Stream, Breadfruit Trees, Butterflies
15 War Meke
16 Bure Bure. Rewa River, Fiji. People of Colo
17 Bure Bure. Rewa River, Fiji. People of Colo
18 Spearing Fish on the Reef, Fiji
19 Spearing Fish on the Reef
20 Meke of Lakeba
21 Moala
22 Houndfish Chasing Goggle Eyes
23 Mirami
24 Sun, Thunder (Moala)
25 Moonlight at Loma Loma, Lau Group
26 A Solomoni Boy
27 A Tongan Boy
28 Loma Loma
29 Evening—Carrying Pandanus Leaves
30 Village of Naroi, Moala
31 Nataveira, Rewa
32 Vakamololo

33 The Marine Parade, Moala
34 Amberjack
35 Na Aissama, a Fijian Village
36–55 Drawings of Chiefs and Natives
56 Young Grouper
57 Isaac and Benjamin. Movement of Climbing a Cocoanut Tree
58 Starlight and Spider Lilies
59 Sea Garden Study for Mural Decoration
60 Sea Garden Study for Mural Decoration
61 Sea Garden Study for Mural Decoration
62 Sea Garden Study for Mural Decoration
63 Handline Fishing on Reef
66 The Water Glass
67 Killing the Barracuda
68 The Bay, Whale Cay, Bahamas
69 The Wickedest Mule in the Bahamas
70 The Durgan
71 Hooked Barracuda
72 Bacchanal
73 The Glassy Eyed Snapper
74 Barracuda Leap
75 The Sisters
76 The Dancing Tree, Whale Cay
77 Wild Dog



70 THE DURGAN



56 YOUNG GROUPER